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Letter dated 28 January 1998 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In my previous letter of 19 September 1997, I had informed Your Excellency of my Government's deep concern regarding the escalating militarization campaign of the Greek Cypriot administration.

Under instructions, I wish to draw your attention once again to this military escalation in Southern Cyprus which has now reached a new stage as a result of the construction of the military airbase in Paphos, which has been completed and became operational as of 24 January 1998.

It is reported that the official inauguration of the airbase is to take place in March with the attendance of the Greek Defence Minister, Mr. Tsohatzopoulos.

The Greek Cypriot authorities have publicly declared that combat aircraft from Greece will be deployed on the airbase.

The arms build-up in Southern Cyprus has for a long time been assuming grave proportions. The Greek Cypriot administration has brought its current military expenditure to a level in excess of $2 million a day, which is in per capita terms among the highest in the world. Over recent years, T-80 and AMX-30 tanks and BMP-3 and Leonidas type armoured combat vehicles have been imported into Southern Cyprus. Despite the concerns expressed by the Security Council, the transaction for deploying S-300 missile systems remains in force.

The construction of the military airbase adds a highly destabilizing dimension to the military equation in the island and the region. Moreover, it

contravenes various Security Council resolutions calling upon the parties to refrain from any action which would exacerbate the situation.

It should also be noted that the 1960 Treaties of Guarantee and of Alliance, while providing the security of the Turkish and Greek Cypriot communities, stipulate that no threat could be directed from Cyprus against the security of the Guarantor Powers.

The current situation once again demonstrates that Greece and the Greek Cypriot administration completely and contemptuously ignore the 1960 Treaties.

The deployment of Greek combat aircraft in Southern Cyprus will create a very dangerous source of tension in the island. Bearing in mind the tragic events that occurred between 1963 and 1974, as a result of the use of armed force by the Greek/Greek Cypriot camp, the construction of an airbase and the deployment of Greek combat aircraft should be a cause of great concern not only for Turkey, but for all who take an interest in peace and stability in the island and in the region.

Following the decision to deploy S-300 missile systems in Southern Cyprus, the construction of the military airbase in Paphos for the stationing of Greek combat aircraft has brought the parties to the threshold of a crisis.

The Greek/Greek Cypriot camp will bear the responsibility for any development that may lead to undesirable consequences.

The Turkish Government will not remain indifferent in the face of provocative and hostile actions directed against the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and Turkey, and will act as a Guarantor Power, in accordance with its Treaty rights and obligations, with a view to protecting the Turkish Cypriot people and preserving the balance between Turkey and Greece.

In the light of the gravity of this latest development, I hope that Your Excellency will do your utmost to impress upon the Greek/Greek Cypriot camp the importance of desisting from actions which threaten peace and security in Cyprus and in the Eastern Mediterranean.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 61, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Hüseyin E. ÇELEM
Ambassador
Permanent Representative